THE SWORD OF ISLAM

BY ARTHUR N. WOLLASTON, C.I.E.

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PREFACE

SOME years ago I published a work entitled *Half-hours with Muhammad.* The edition has been exhausted, and, under the advice of those who have followed its fortunes with uniform kindness and friendly feeling, I have determined, in revising it, to enlarge somewhat the scope of the volume by the addition of several chapters, which it is hoped will lend additional interest to an attempt to popularise an all-important page of Oriental history.

It is obvious that the enlargement of the volume necessitates a change of title, inasmuch as, although the Prophet of Arabia must ever remain the central figure in any work treating of the Religion which he founded, yet it would be altogether unreasonable to give to a publication dealing with many phases of the history of Islam a name indicating that it was confined to a life of Muhammad.

To this brief explanation it is only necessary to add that no attempt has been made to solve the many vexed questions which come to the front at every turn. The volume is intended rather for the

general reader than the scholar, who will find little in the accompanying pages that is new; in fact, in many cases, information is given in the very words of authors who dealt with the subject years ago. In a book of this nature much use has naturally been made of previous work. I regret that it has not been possible to make individual acknowledgment in every case. The merit of the work—if merit it possesses—is that the subject has been treated in a way suitable, it is hoped, for general information. At a time when the East with its bright imagery and ever-varying romance is gradually arousing the attention of the less emotional West, it has been thought advisable to enter the lists with an endeavour to awaken interest in the history of a religion and its followers—no inconsiderable number of whom bow the knee of submission to the Emperor of India. For nearly half a century destiny has linked me with the East, and I shall be more than repaid for any labour bestowed on the present volume if, haply, readers of the hour cast an eye of favour upon a work the interest of which centres in Eastern lands and Eastern peoples.

A. N. WOLLASTON.

GLEN HILL, WALMER,
March 1905.

CONTENTS

THE SWORD OF ISLAM

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF ARABIA PRIOR TO THE TIME OF MUHAMMAD. B.C. 2000-A.D. 570

BETWEEN the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf lies a triangular continent, arid and well-nigh waterless, save where the fertility of an occasional flood lends to the scene the freshness and charm of an oasis in the desert. Wild, desolate, bleak, dreary, and monotonous, the sandy region of Arabia presents but few features to command interest; yet this land, so unattractive in its nature, so uninteresting in its aspect, has played an all-important part in the history of the world, for it can claim high honour and distinction as the birthplace of the Prophet of Islam —a genius who, whatever may be the verdict of posterity in regard to his "mission," has had a more potent influence on the destinies of mankind than has been vouchsafed to any son of Adam who has left footprints on the sands of time.

The peninsula was divided by the Greeks and

Romans into three portions—Arabia Felix, Arabia Petræa, and Arabia Deserta; but, according to Mr Badger, "this nomenclature is unknown to the Arabs themselves—'Barru'l-Arab,' or 'the Land of the Arabs,' is the name given by them to the peninsula generally. The other divisions are the 'Al-Hijaz,' which comprises Arabia Petræa and several of its adjacent territories; 'Al-Yaman,' including Arabia Felix, and the country forming the south-west extremity of the kingdom; and 'Najd' (literally high land), which may be termed Central Arabia."

"The first peopling of Arabia," says Sir William Muir, "is a subject on which we may in vain look for any light from the tradition of Arabia itself." There are, however, grounds for supposing that some descendants of Kush, the son of Ham, migrated to that country, where they ultimately became merged into the general mass of the community. These were followed by the offspring of Joktan, a descendant of Shem, a people who settled in the north of the land, while the kindred of Peleg, the brother of the last-named, established their tents in Mesopotamia. This latter individual was the ancestor of Abraham and Nahor his brother, from which two patriarchs descended five great branches of settlers:—(1) The Ishmaelites, who inhabited the land from the northern extremity of the Red Sea, towards the mouth of the Euphrates. Amongst their branches were the well-known Nabathians—destined in after years to occupy a commanding position in Northern Arabia—and the Kedarenes, whose history was so famous in the annals of Arabia that the term eventually came to be

applied by the Jews to the Bedouins in general. (2) The Keturahites, who are known to posterity as settlers in the great desert in the north of Arabia. They derive their name from Ketura, who bore to Abraham six sons, all of whom migrated during the lifetime of their father. The tribe included, too, the familiar name of the Midianites, the offspring of the fourth of these last-mentioned sons. (3) The Edomites, as their name implies, the descendants of Esau. (4) The Nahorites, so called because their founders, Uz and Buz, were sons of Nahor, the brother of Abraham. (5) The Moabites and Ammonites, descended from the sons of Lot, Abraham's brother's son. These last-mentioned tribes extended still further north in the region of the Dead Sea.

For twenty centuries these peoples and nations "lived, moved, and had their being"; yet but little is recorded as to their history.

"Our knowledge of the race" (the quotation is again from Sir W. Muir's masterly Essay), "is confined to the casual accounts of the few border tribes which came in contact with the Jewish and Roman Governments, and to an occasional glimpse, as in the case of the Queen of Sheba and the Roman expedition, into the interior. We may not, however, doubt that, during the five-and-twenty centuries which elapsed between Abraham and Muhammad, the mutual relations of the Arab tribes were undergoing an uninterrupted succession of the revolutions and changes to which human society, especially when broken up into numerous independent fragments, is always exposed. Some of the tribes, like the Horims of old, were extirpated; others, as the Amalekites of Petra, driven from their original seats; some migrated to distant settlements, or merged into more extensive and commanding bodies; while intermarriage, conquest, and phylarchical revolution united races of different origin, and severed those sprung from a common stock. But of such changes, excepting in one or two of the border tribes, we have hardly any record."

It will suffice for present purposes to state generally that there was in the south-west of Arabia a dynasty founded by Kahtan, which flourished in Yaman between the years 800 B.C. and 500 B.C., from whom was descended Abd Shams Saba the Great, the founder of the city which gave its name to the Sabians. This chieftain was in turn the progenitor of Himyar and Kahlan, from whom the whole Arab-speaking race are supposed to have sprung. The descendants of the former patriarch founded their homes chiefly in towns, and led a fixed and settled mode of life, while their kinsmen, having a migratory instinct, chose the unsettled and wandering existence which has throughout all ages been the delight of the children of the desert.

As regards the north of Arabia, there were two kingdoms known as Hira and Ghassan, both of which states owed their origin to the spirit of migration which, from various causes, led to a general movement of the Yaman tribes to more genial and flourishing spots around the valley of the Euphrates. The former city was founded about the year A.D. 200, and soon assumed such a prominence and splendour as to lend to its ruler the proud title of "Prince of Hira." For more than 300 years this dynasty exercised a powerful influence in the affairs of Arabia; but, exposed to attacks of the Romans on the one side, and the Persians on the other, it needed but the destruction of time to lay in the dust a Government of which the glory would have been quenched in the stream of Oblivion, had its traditions not been handed down by the poets and men of letters who in its palmy days used to flock to the Court of Hira. The decline

and fall of the dynasty in question is so romantic as to merit a few passing words.

Towards the close of the sixth century the sceptre of Hira was in the hands of Noman the Fifth. This sovereign had been educated by Adi, one of the most renowned poets of the day, who, on the termination of this important duty, betook himself to the Court of Persia, where he received the post of Arabic Secretary to the reigning monarch.

"In A.D. 581," thus states Sir W. Muir, "he was despatched on a specific embassy to Constantinople, and entrusted with a rich present for the Emperor Tiberius. He travelled back by the imperial relays of horses, and by a route calculated to convey the largest idea of the power and resources of the Roman Empire. On his return to Medain, or Ctesiphon, he obtained leave of absence to revisit Hira, where he was received by the prince and the people with triumphant acclamation. On this occasion he met, at the Church of Tuma, Hind, the granddaughter of the reigning prince, Mundzir the Fourth, and daughter of his own pupil Noman. As the damsel partook of the Sacrament, Adi caught a glimpse of her, and became enamoured. His passion was reciprocated, and though she was scarce eleven years old, they were united in marriage."

Years rolled on, and we find the beautiful Hind, charming as she was, secluded and buried to the world in a convent, whither she had retired consequent on the murder of her husband by order of his former pupil, the faithless Noman. She lived, however, to witness a terrible retribution at the hands of fate, for the blood-stained assassin, some years subsequent to the crime which tarnished his fair name, was deposed by a conquering army which invaded his territories, laid waste his possessions, and put the sovereign to death.

The fate of Noman was striking and remark-

able :—Zaid, the son of Adi, bent upon revenging the death of his father, hit upon a method as "singular as it proved successful." The story is told by Sir W. Muir.

"He pictured in warm colours the charms of the women of Hira before the King of Persia, who readily adopted the suggestion that some of the fair relatives of his vassal might well adorn the royal harem. An embassy charged with this errand was despatched to Noman, who, surprised and alarmed by the demand, expressed aloud his wonder that the Monarch of Persia was not satisfied with the antelope beauties of his own land. The term was equivocal, and Noman was denounced as having insulted the females of Persia by likening them to cows! The wrath of the Chosroes fell heavily upon his ungallant vassal, and he fled from Hira. After vainly wandering in search of allies among the Arab tribes, he left his arms in the custody of Hani, a chief of the Bani Bakr, and in despair delivered himself up to the King of Persia. The unfortunate prince was passed in mockery between two long rows of lovely girls splendidly attired, and by each was taunted with the question, whether *she* was a Persian *cow*? He was cast into prison, and there died or was murdered. Thus ended the Lakhmite Dynasty in the year A.D. 605, having lasted for the long space of 327 years."

The Princess Hind retired to a convent; and after the lapse of many years, when she was upwards of ninety years of age, the Muhammadan Commander in Iraq, for political motives, demanded her hand in marriage. The answer betokened that time had neither dimmed the clearness of her perception, nor quenched the pride of her noble birth, for she at once scorned the union, the object of which was clearly recognised. "If it were my youth or my beauty" (such were the words of the haughty dame) "that dictated the proposal, I should not refuse; but your desire is that you may say, 'The kingdom of Noman, and with it his

daughter, have passed into my hands.' Is not that your thought?" So the high-spirited matron refused to quit the cloister for the throne, and passed in retirement the short remaining period of her long and chequered career.

The government of Hira then passed into the hands of a chieftain of the tribe of Tay, who had rendered good service to the King of Persia; but the Arabs, indignant at the murder of Noman, began to show signs of disaffection, by plundering and pillaging the Iranian villages in their neighbourhood. Various expedients were adopted by the "King of Kings" to put a stop to these raids, but in vain, and at length a vast army was sent to crush the rebellion. The danger which pressed upon the Arabs caused them to flock from all parts of the country to a spot called Zu-kar, under the standard of a warrior by name Hantzala, who had by common consent been chosen to lead them on to victory or death. The battle was fierce and bloody: nor, indeed, could it have been otherwise, seeing that the Arabs, fighting as they were for national independence, were maddened to desperation; and history, too, relates that, lest there should be signs of wavering on the part of any faint-hearted son of the desert, their commander, previous to the commencement of hostilities, severed with his own hand the girths of the camels on which were seated his wife and the other women of his tribe—an indication that, as defeat would involve captivity and dishonour, the struggle was deadly, the contest mortal. Victory alternated from hour to hour, but nothing could for long resist the desperate efforts of the lion-hearted

Arabs, and in the end the Persian army had to succumb to the onslaughts of their conquering rivals. This battle, so momentous in its results, occurred in A.D. 611, just at the time Muhammad had commenced his prophetic career; and thus it chanced that the prophet of Arabia, instead of finding a united race subject to the strong hand of the Monarch of Persia, met with an agglomeration of tribes who, rendering but half-hearted allegiance to a satrap holding nominal sway in the kingdom of Hira, were, in reality, independent of all control. The advantage which this altered condition of affairs afforded to the founder of the Muhammadan faith is too striking to pass unnoticed, for on the memorable battle-day of Zu-kar Islam tottered in the balance.

The Ghassanide kingdom, situated on the western side of the Syrian desert, was founded about the year A.D. 120 by a body of Arabs who migrated from Yaman. Pursuing their journey northward, they pitched their tents near a fountain of the name of Ghassan, where they remained for a period sufficiently lengthened to cause their race to be known by the name of the auspicious spring which supplied them with the one great necessary of life in the parched plains of a sandy desert. Towards the close of the third century they had so successfully established themselves, that the Byzantine authorities recognised their chief, Thalaba by name, as "Phylarch," or King of the Ghassanides; but having no fixed seat of government, each successive prince chose his own capital, and the history of the dynasty is confused, perplexing, and uncertain. The Phylarchs, however, appear to have had intimate relations

with the Byzantine Court, by whom, towards the middle of the sixth century, the title of king was bestowed upon the faithful Ghassanide ally, who had at that time rendered assistance to the Emperor Justinian against his enemies the Persians. This honour the newly-created sovereign subsequently requited by beguiling the Byzantines to destruction in the glare of a pestilential sun, while he betook himself elsewhere on the supposed errand of foiling the plans of the Monarch of Persia—an act of treachery and deceit which secured for himself the booty of a rich tract of country. Towards the close of the sixth century the glory of the Ghassanide dynasty was on the wane, and Sir W. Muir draws attention to the significant fact that, as observed by a Muslim writer, their decadence "was preparing the way for the glories of the Arabian Prophet"—a truth which was verified by the circumstance that in A.D. 637, Jabala VI., the last of the race, embraced Islam and joined the standard of the Faithful, though his zeal for the new religion which he had adopted was evanescent, and he retired to Constantinople as a renegade from Muhammadism to ponder in the leisure of obscurity over the marvellous and rapid spread of the doctrines which he had cast aside as beneath the notice of a Ghassanide monarch!

Mention has been made of the Prophet of Arabia, but before proceeding to sketch his singular and interesting career, it will be necessary to refer to the origin and ancestry of the tribe from which he sprang.

When Hagar was cast forth by the Patriarch Abraham, she journeyed the wilderness with her son

Ishmael in search of water; the lad, too young to endure the fatigue of wandering about with his mother—so runs the Eastern legend—was left alone for a while in the valley of Mecca—alone in the mighty solitude of an Eastern waste! Crying and sobbing, the hapless child's screams served but to increase his fear and anger; so he betook himself to the infantile freak of kicking. Just at this moment his mother returned, having wandered in the frenzy of despair to and fro between the little hill of Marwa and that of Safa, seeking water to quench the agonies of thirst, which threatened to destroy alike herself and the offspring which was the solace of her life. What was her astonishment to find, under the feet of the peevish and terrified lad, a stream of water, which bubbled up at the very spot where he had kicked the ground. Nor was the store of wonders as yet exhausted, for we are told that a tribe, supposed to be the Amalekites, who happened to be in the vicinity, whither they had been attracted by a flight of birds hovering over the place, came to the spot, and, finding the spring, at once settled in the locality. With them Ishmael remained till he was seven years of age, when his father Abraham, following the commands of God, went forth to a mountain to sacrifice his son. In vain did the arch-fiend—who on this occasion assumed the form of a human being—endeavour to dissuade the Patriarch from his purpose, and thereby cause him to manifest distrust in the mercy of his Almighty Creator. The "friend of God," as he is called in the East, was firm to his purpose to sacrifice his son; but as he lifted up his hand to slay the hapless youth, an angel from heaven

darted forth and bade him desist. The Patriarch had shown his willingness to obey the mandates of the Lord of Creation, even when it involved the loss of a beloved son: enough! so a ram was offered up as a sacrifice in place of the lad. In due course Ishmael took unto himself a wife from amongst the maidens of the Amalekites. About this time two tribes from Yaman, known respectively in the annals of Arabia as the people of Jorhom and Katura, appeared in the regions where the Amalekites were settled. The latter, while endeavouring, though not with much success, to oppose the new comers, chanced to be harassed by a plague of ants, and in sore distress were eventually forced to succumb to their more fortunate rivals, to whom Ishmael, probably of necessity, transferred his allegiance. It so happened that, during the casual absence of her husband from home, the wife of this young chieftain committed an act of inhospitality in reference to her father-in-law, Abraham; whereupon the latter, enraged at a proceeding which, amongst Eastern nations, is considered an offence of the blackest dye, persuaded his son to divorce the luckless lady, and take to himself a spouse from amongst the strangers who had succeeded to power. So it was that the daughter of the Jorhom chief graced the tent of Ishmael the son of the desert. On the occasion of one of his visits, the Patriarch Abraham, in company with his son, erected the Kaba at Mecca, and re-established the ancient rites of pilgrimage on the sacred spot.

"After the death of Ishmael, and his son Nabit," thus writes Sir W. Muir, "the management of the Temple devolved on

Modad, the Jorhom chief, who held the imposts of the northern or upper part of Mecca, while Samayda, the Katura chief, held the southern. But a quarrel having arisen between the two tribes, the Bani Jorhom, aided by the descendants of Ishmael, expelled the Bani Katura, who joined and were lost amongst the Amalekites. From this point (which the juxtaposition with Ishmael would make at least 2000 years anterior to Muhammad) to Adnan, who lived a little before the Christian era, the legend is blank; and although the ready pen of the traditionists has filled up the space by a list of Muhammad's progenitors, derived from Jewish sources, yet Muhammad himself never traced his pedigree higher than Adnan, and declared that all who went further back were guilty of fabrication and falsehood."

Adnan, who is supposed to have flourished B.C. 130, left two sons, Madd and Akk, whose numerous offspring spread by degrees throughout the whole extent of the peninsula. Passing over an interval of rather less than three centuries, during which various chiefs appeared on the scene—some known to fame as the founders of families, others lost in the maze of obscurity which surrounds the annals of the period—the pen of the historian narrates that A.D. 134 gave birth to a chieftain, Nazr by name, the grandfather of Fihr (born A.D. 200), which latter was surnamed "Quraish"—an appellation to which the events of subsequent years have given the significance which attaches to aught which concerns the ancestry of the Prophet of Arabia. As to the derivation of the term, a variety of conjectures have been hazarded. Some are of opinion that the word signifies "noble," while others, admitting this, consider that it was originally a proper name, to which circumstance the meaning in question, which it afterwards came to possess, owes its origin. Then, again, on the other hand, there are reasons for supposing

that Nazr had a guide called Quraish, whence that chieftain's caravan was termed the "Caravan of Quraish," till at length the appellation gradually attached to himself. Another surmise is that the term is taken from a fish bearing that name, or from "Qursh," a word signifying "a high-bred camel." Lastly, others refer it to a root which signifies trade. Towards the close of the second century a body of Azdites pitched their tents near Mecca, whereupon the Jorhomites, who up to that time had retained their supremacy, endeavoured to expel the unwelcome settlers; but success did not meet their efforts, and the intruders took up their abode permanently in this region. After awhile some of the victors migrated towards Syria, and the rest, known in history as the Bani Khoza (the remnant), combining with some neighbouring tribes, attacked the Jorhomites, and drove them out of the country.

While these struggles were going on in one locality, the Maddites, the ancestors of the Quraish, were engaged in an attempt to oust some further adventurers belonging to the Khozaite tribe, who had endeavoured to obtain a footing between Mecca and Tayif. They were successful, and thereupon a grand contest for the charge of the Kaba ensued between them and the Azdite tribes, who had expelled the Jorhomites. The children of Nazr gained the victory, the fruits of which, however, after a brief interval, were snatched from them by the Bani Khoza, who are said to have retained the government of Mecca for upwards of two centuries.

Such continued to be the position of parties till the beginning of the fifth century, by which time the

Quraish had so greatly advanced in numbers and power as to rival their Khozaite rulers. It was reserved for Qussai (the progenitor of Muhammad) to assert the right of his tribe to the guardianship of the Kaba, and the government of Mecca. The outline of his romantic story is as follows:—Kilab, the fifth in descent from Fihr Quraish, died leaving two sons, Zohra and Zaid; the former grown up, the latter, who was born about A.D. 400, being but an infant. The widow of the deceased chieftain married a man of the Bani Ozra tribe, and followed him with the lad Zaid to her new home in the highlands south of Syria, where she gave birth to another son called Riza. When Zaid grew up he was called "Qussai," because of the separation from his father's house; but at last, learning the noble rank of his ancestry, he resolved to return to Mecca, and travelled thither with a company of the Ozra pilgrims. At Mecca he was recognised by his brother Zohra, and at once received into the position which his birth entitled him to hold. Qussai was a man of commanding person and of an energetic and ambitious temper. He was treated with great distinction by Holail the Khozaite king, who gave him his daughter Hobba in marriage, and permitted him—or rather perhaps his wife—to assume the immediate management of the Kaba, and some functions attaching to the government of the city. On the death of the benefactor who had bestowed on him power and position, Qussai, now possessing four grown-up sons, and himself being a man of wealth and influence, perceived his opportunity, and having canvassed among the Quraish for support, bound them together

in a secret league. Further, as the Khozaites are said to have outnumbered the latter tribe, he wrote to his brother Riza to aid him at the ensuing pilgrimage with an armed band of the Bani Ozra.

Meanwhile, another occasion presented itself. From remote times the Bani Sufa (a distant branch collateral with the Quraish) had been the possessors of certain privileges in connection with the temple at Mecca, amongst the rest the highly-prized right of dismissing the multitudes who annually repaired as pilgrims to the sacred precincts. The time had, however, now arrived when Qussai, conscious of his strength, determined to question this privilege: so, stepping forth before the assembled throng, he claimed the honour in question. A dispute took place, and weapons were drawn, but after a sharp encounter, in which Riza, with 300 of the Bani Ozra, rushed to the succour of Qussai, the Sufa yielded the coveted office to their opponents.

To return to the Khozaites; as may be imagined, they regarded with jealousy the usurpation of their prescriptive right, and began to entertain suspicions that Qussai would seek to snatch from them their own hereditary title to supremacy over the Hijaz: whereupon they prepared to resist, and associated with themselves some quondam allies, who had aided in the expulsion of the Jorhomites. The Quraish rallied round Qussai, who, as before, was supported by Riza and his comrades. A second but more general and bloody action ensued. The victory remained uncertain, for the carnage was great on both sides, and the combatants naturally agreed to a truce, surrendering the decision of their claims into

the hands of an aged sage named Amr. The umpire affirming the pretensions of Qussai, yielded to him the guardianship of the Kaba and the government of Mecca: further, still more strongly to mark the justice of Qussai's position, Amr decreed the price of blood for all men killed on the side of the latter, while the dead amongst the Khozaites were allowed to pass unavenged by fine.

Such is the most generally received account of the way in which the command of Mecca passed into the hands of Qussai. Some, however, are of opinion that Holail, the Khozaite king, openly held that Qussai was best entitled to succeed him, and therefore left to his son-in-law the coveted inheritance. Others maintain that the monarch in question gave up the care of the Kaba, with its keys, to his daughter Hobba, and appointed an individual of the name of Ghubshan to assist her; whereupon Qussai —so runs the legend—made the man intoxicated and purchased from him, when in a state of incapability, the control of the sacred city in exchange for a skin of wine and some camels—a proceeding which the Khozaites resenting, hostilities ensued. A third statement is that the last-mentioned tribe, being attacked by a deadly pestilence, which nearly extirpated them, resolved to evacuate Mecca, selling or otherwise disposing of their houses in the city.

However, be the circumstances what they may, it is beyond question that towards the middle of the fifth century (A.D. 440) Qussai ruled supreme at Mecca. The first act of his authority was to bring within the valley his kinsmen of Quraish descent, many of whom had been wont to live in the surrounding glens and

mountains: this done, the town was laid out anew, a separate quarter being allotted to each family. But so large an influx of inhabitants, added to the regular distribution of the land, swelled the city far beyond its previous bounds, and the site of the new habitations trenched upon the acacias and brushwood of the valley. It chanced that the superstition of the place had invested the trees with so peculiar a sanctity that the people feared to remove them. Without hesitation Qussai, superior to such scruples, seized a hatchet, the Quraish followed his example, and the wilderness was soon cleared. Owing to his having effected the reunion of his clan, Qussai was called "the Gatherer." The next civic work of this enterprising chieftain was to build a Hall of Council, near the Kaba, having its porch opening towards that sacred spot. Here all political movements were discussed, and social ceremonies solemnised. In this building, too, girls first assumed the dress of womanhood, and within its revered precincts marriages were celebrated. Thence all caravans set forth, and thither the traveller, on returning from his journey, first bent his steps. When war was imminent it was there that the banner was mounted upon its staff by Qussai himself, or by one of his sons. The assumption of the presidency in the Hall of Council riveted the authority of its builder as the Shaikh of Mecca, and governor of the country, and "both before and after his death" —such is the language of one of the most famous of Muslim historians—"his ordinances were obeyed and venerated as people obey and venerate the observances of religion."

Besides these civil offices, Qussai possessed the

chief religious dignities connected with the worship of the nation; thus he held the keys, and with them the control, of the Kaba, or holy of holies, in the temple of Mecca; his was the privilege of giving drink to the votaries who were wont annually to repair to the sacred city, and providing them with food—prerogatives which in the eyes of the generous Arabs, invested his name with a peculiar lustre. During the pilgrimage leathern bags of water were, at his instigation, hung up at Mecca, and other places in the vicinity; and stimulating the liberality of the inhabitants he persuaded them to subscribe annually an ample fund, which was expended by himself in the gratuitous distribution of food to the pilgrims. With strange inconsistency, though it was ostensibly to secure the right of marshalling the processions of pilgrims on their return from Mecca that he drew his sword, he did not, when established in power, personally exercise this prerogative, which, in common with some other privileges, he delegated to the hands of subordinates.

The last days of the Patriarch are portrayed by the Arab historian "Waqidi" in terms of simplicity, which enhances the charm of all that proceeds from the pen of a writer, whose language recalls in some measure the unaffected grandeur of early biblical narrative:—

"In process of time Qussai became old and infirm. Abdul Dar was the oldest of his sons, but he lacked influence and power, and his brethren raised themselves up against him. Wherefore Qussai resigned all his offices into the hands of his firstborn, saying: 'Thus wilt thou retain thine authority over thy people, even though they raise themselves up against thee: let no man enter the Kaba unless thou hast opened it unto him: nor let any banner

of the Quraish be mounted upon its staff for war, excepting by thine own hands: let no one drink at Mecca, but of the water which thou hast drawn, nor any pilgrim eat therein save of thy food: and let not the Quraish resolve upon any business but in thy Council Hall.' So he gave him up the Hall of Council, and the custody of the Holy House, and the giving of drink and of food, that he might unite his brethren unto him. And Qussai died and was buried in Al Hajun."

So passed Qussai from the stage of life, towards the middle of the fifth century of the Christian era.

For a time, and not without considerable difficulty, the eldest son, Abdul Dar, contrived, notwithstanding his weakness, to retain at least a nominal supremacy. But he enjoyed little influence in comparison with his brother Abd Manaf, on whom the real management of public affairs devolved, and who laid out fresh quarters for the growing population of the city. Before the death of Abdul Dar the whole of the offices of state and religion passed into the hands of his sons; but they all died within a short space of time, and his grandsons, who inherited the dignities of the family (A.D. 500), were of too tender years effectually to maintain their rights. Meanwhile, the sons of Abd Manaf having grown up and continued in possession of their father's influence, conspired to wrest from the descendants of Abdul Dar the hereditary offices bequeathed by Qussai. Amongst the new candidates for power one Hashim took the lead, grounding his claim on the superior dignity attaching to his branch of the family. But the descendants of Abdul Dar refused to cede any of their rights, and an open rupture ensued. The community of

Mecca was equally divided between the two factions, one portion of the Quraish siding with the claimants to, and the others with the actual possessors of, the offices, while but few remained neutral. Both parties swore that they would prosecute their claim and be faithful amongst themselves "so long as there remained in the sea sufficient water to wet a tuft of wool." To add stringency to their oath, Hashim and his faction filled a dish with aromatic substances; this done and having placed it close to the Kaba and put their hands therein, they rubbed them upon the Holy House and invoked the aid of the gods to their enterprise. The opposite party similarly dipped *their* hands into a bowl of blood and sought the assistance of the powers of Heaven. The opponents now made ready for the contest, and the ranks were already marshalled within sight of each other, when for some unexplained cause they mutually called for a truce. The conditions proposed were that Hashim and his party should have the offices of providing food and water for the pilgrims, the descendants of Abdul Dar, as hitherto, retaining the custody of the Kaba and the Hall of Council, as well as the right of raising the banner. Upon these terms peace was restored, and the disputants returned to their homes, each faction content with its bloodless victory.

Hashim thus installed in the office of entertaining the pilgrims, fulfilled his duties with a princely magnificence. Not only was he himself possessed of great riches, but many others of the Quraish had also by trading acquired much wealth. He appealed to them, therefore, as his grandfather Qussai had done before him: "Ye are neighbours of God and the

keepers of His house. The pilgrims who come honouring the sanctity of this temple are His guests, and it is meet that ye should entertain them above all other guests. Ye are especially chosen of God and exalted unto this high dignity; therefore, honour His guests and refresh them. For, from distant cities on their lean and jaded camels they come unto you fatigued and harassed, with hair dishevelled and bodies covered with the dust and squalor of the long way. Then invite them hospitably and furnish them with water in abundance." Hashim set the example by a munificent expenditure from his own resources, and the Quraish were not backward in contributing, every man according to his ability, though a fixed cess was also levied upon them all. Water sufficient for the prodigious assemblage was collected from the wells of Mecca, in cisterns close by the Kaba, and in reservoirs of leather at the various stations frequented by the votaries who annually repaired to the sacred city. The distribution of food commenced upon the day on which the pilgrims set out for the sacred city and Mount Arafat (of which more anon), and continued till the assemblage dispersed. During this period they were entertained with pottage of meat and bread, or of butter and barley, variously prepared, and with the favourite national repast of dates.

Thus Hashim supported the credit of Mecca. But his name is even more renowned for the splendid charity by which he relieved the necessities of his fellow citizens, when the latter were by a long-continued famine reduced to extreme distress. On that occasion he proceeded to Syria, and purchasing an immense stock of food, packed it in panniers, and

conveyed it upon camels to Mecca. There the provisions were cooked, the camels slaughtered and roasted, which done, the whole was divided amongst the people.

The foreign relations of the Quraish were managed solely by the sons of Abd Manaf; though with the Byzantine authorities and the Ghassanide prince a treaty was concluded by Hashim himself, who received from the Emperor a rescript authorising the tribe to travel to and from Syria in safety. He also secured the friendship of the inhabitants on the road by promising to carry their goods without hire. One brother, too, Abd Shams by name, made a treaty with a neighbouring people, in pursuance of which the Quraish traded to Abyssinia; while his other brothers concluded alliances respectively with the King of Persia, who allowed them to traffic in Iraq and Fars, and with the Kings of Himyar, who encouraged commercial operations in Yaman. Thus the affairs of the Quraish prospered in every direction.

To Hashim is further ascribed the credit of having established upon an uniform footing the mercantile expeditions of his people, so that every winter a caravan set out regularly for Yaman and Abyssinia, while in the summer a second visited the marts of Syria.

The success and glory of Hashim exposed him to the envy of the son of his brother, Abd Shams. This chief, Omaiya by name, was opulent, and he expended his riches in a vain attempt to rival the splendour of his uncle's munificence. The Quraish perceived the endeavour, and turned it into ridicule. Omaiya was enraged. "Who," said he, "is Hashim?" So he

defied him to a trial of tongues, each party endeavouring to establish his pretensions to superiority. Hashim would willingly have avoided a wrangle with one so much his inferior both in years and dignity; but the people, who loved such exhibitions, would not excuse him: so the proud chieftain consented; but on the express stipulation that the vanquished party should lose fifty black-eyed camels, and pass ten years in exile from Mecca. A Khozaite soothsayer was appointed umpire, who, having heard the pretensions of both, pronounced Hashim to be the victor. The conqueror took the fifty camels, and slaughtering them in the desert, fed therewith all the people who were present, while in turn Omaiya set out for Syria, and remained there the stipulated period of his banishment. The circumstance is carefully and superstitiously noted by the Muhammadan writers as the first trace of that rivalry between the Hashimite and Omaiyad factions which in after ages shook the Khalifat to its base.

Hashim, now advanced in years, chanced, on a mercantile journey to the north, to visit Madina with a party of the Quraish. As he traded there in one of the markets of the city he was attracted by the graceful form of a female, directing her people from an elevated position how to buy and sell for her. She was discreet, and withal comely, and made a tender impression upon the heart of Hashim. He inquired of the citizens whether she was married or single, and they answered that she was divorced. They added, however, that the dignity of Salma, daughter of Amr—the name which the fair enchantress bore—was so great amongst her people, that she would not

marry, save on the condition that she should remain mistress of her own actions, and have at pleasure the power of divorce. Hashim, in spite of the reservations in question, offered her his hand in marriage—to such an alliance she was nothing loth, for she was well aware of his renown and noble birth. So he married her, and made a great feast to the Quraish, of whom forty were present with the caravan. The result of this union was a son named Shiba, born (A.D. 500) at her father's home in Madina, whither the bride had retired.

Scarce had the sixth century dawned upon mankind than Hashim was gathered to his fathers, an event which is generally supposed to have occurred in A.D. 510. He left his dignities to his elder brother Al Muttalib, who conducted the entertainment of the pilgrims in so splendid a style as to gain the epithet "The Munificent." Meanwhile his little nephew Shiba was growing up under the care of the widowed mother at Madina. Several years after his brother's death, Al Muttalib chanced to meet a traveller from the latter city, who described in glowing terms the noble bearing of the young Meccan. The chieftain's heart smote him because he had so long left his brother's son in a distant locality, and he set out forthwith to bring the lad to his ancestral home. Arrived at Madina, he inquired for the child, and found him practising archery among the boys of the city. Recognising the youth at once from his likeness to his father, he embraced him, wept over him, and clothed him in a suit of Yaman raiment. His mother sent to invite Al Muttalib to her house, but the zealous chieftain

refused to untie a knot of his camel's accoutrements until he had carried off the child to Mecca. Salma, taken by surprise at the proposal, was passionate in her grief. Al Muttalib, however, reasoned with her, and explained the great advantages which her son was losing by absence from his father's house. At length the fond mother, seeing the man's determined action, relented, and in a few days the lad turned his back upon the home of his childhood. Reaching Mecca in broad light of day, the people supposed that the new-comer was a slave whom his master had purchased, and exclaimed, "Abdul Muttalib," which being interpreted is, "the servant of Al Muttalib;" though the necessary explanations at once convinced them of their error, the appellation clung to the son of Hashim for the rest of his life.

Al Muttalib proceeded in due time to instal his nephew in the possession of his father's property; but Naufal, another uncle, interposed and violently deprived the young man of his paternal estate. Abdul Muttalib, who by this time had reached years of discretion, appealed to his tribe to aid him in resisting the usurpation of his rights, but they declined to interfere. He then wrote to his maternal relatives at Madina, who no sooner received the intelligence than eighty mounted men, with Abu Asad at their head, started for Mecca. Abdul Muttalib went forth to meet the party, and invited them to his house, but Abu Asad refused to alight till he had called Naufal to account. So proceeding straightway to the yard of the Holy House he found the man he sought seated in the midst of the Quraish

chiefs. Naufal rose to welcome the new-comer, who, however, refused to accept the proffered hospitality, and drawing his sword sternly declared he would plunge it into the Meccan's bosom unless the latter forthwith reinstated the orphan in his rights. The oppressor was daunted, and agreed to make restitution, ratifying his pledge on oath before the assembled multitude.

Some years after these events, Al Muttalib died while on a mercantile expedition to Yaman, whereupon Abdul Muttalib succeeded to the office of entertaining the pilgrims. But for a long time he was destitute of power and influence, and having but one son to assist him in the assertion of his claims, he found it difficult to cope with the opposing faction of the Quraish. However, good fortune had not deserted him, for, at this period of his career, he discovered the ancient Meccan well "Zamzam," in after years immortalised by the devotions of countless myriads of devotees, who with its waters purge their souls of the offences and sins of corrupt humanity. It happened thus: Finding it laborious to procure water from the scattered wells of Mecca, and store it in cisterns by the Kaba, perhaps, too, aware by tradition of the existence of a well in the vicinity, he made diligent search, and at last came upon the circle of its venerable masonry. It was a remnant of the palmy days of the city, when a rich and incessant stream of commerce flowed in this direction. Centuries had elapsed since the trade had ceased, and with it followed the desertion of Mecca, and the neglect of the well, which had been choked up, either accidentally or by design, the remembrance thereof being so

indistinct that even the site of the spring was unknown.

As Abdul Muttalib, aided by his son, dug deeper and deeper, he came upon two golden gazelles, with the swords and suits of armour which had been buried there by the Jorhomite king more than three centuries before. The rest of the Quraish, envying him these treasures, demanded a share in them. They asserted their right also to the well itself, which they declared had been possessed by their common ancestor Ishmael. Abdul Muttalib was not powerful enough to resist the claim, but he agreed to refer their several pretensions to the decision of *Hobal*, the god whose image was within the Kaba. So six arrows were taken; two coloured yellow for the Kaba, two painted black for Abdul Muttalib, and two stained white for the Quraish. Lots were then cast, with a result that the gazelles fell to the share of the temple, the swords and suits of armour became the lot of Abdul Muttalib, while the Quraish drew blanks. The latter tribe could not avoid acquiescing in the divine will, and were perforce constrained to relinquish the pretensions they had put forward. Abdul Muttalib beat out the golden gazelles into plates, and fixed them by way of ornament to the door of the Kaba, while he hung up the swords before the entrance as a protection to the treasures within. At the same time he added a more effectual guard, in the shape of a lock and key, both of which, so it is said, were made of gold.

The plentiful flow of fresh water which soon filled the "Zamzam," was a great triumph to its fortunate possessor. All other wells in Mecca were now

deserted, and the new spring alone patronised; but above all, from this source the pilgrims were henceforth supplied, and the liquid stream soon began to share in the sacredness attaching to the Kaba. The fame and influence of Abdul Muttalib rapidly increased, and a large family of sons, born to him in later years, added to the estimation in which he was held. For a lengthened period, it is true, he had but one son; feeling so strongly his weakness and inferiority in contending with the large and influential families of those who, in his early career, opposed and thwarted him, he vowed a vow that if destiny should ever grant him ten sons, he would devote one of them as a sacrifice to the Fates. Years rolled on, and the rash father at last found himself surrounded by the fatal number in question, the sight of whom daily reminded him of his pledge. But the oath was sacred and could not be disregarded; bidding his sons accompany him to the Kaba, each was made to write his name upon a lot, which done, the whole of these were made over to the Intendant of the Temple, who cast them in the usual manner. The fatal arrow fell upon the youngest and best beloved of all Abdul Muttalib's sons. The father was inconsolable, but the vow devoting him to the gods, must needs be kept, and the sacrifice be made ready. His daughters wept and clung around the fond parent, who was willingly persuaded to cast lots between the lad and ten camels, the current fine for the blood of a man. If the Deity should accept the ransom, there need be no scruple in sparing the son. But the lot a second time fell upon the hapless youth. Again, and with

the same result, it was cast between him and twenty camels. At each successive trial Abdul Muttalib added ten camels to the stake, but Fortune was inexorable. It was now the tenth throw, and the ransom had reached a hundred camels, when the lot at last fell upon the unfortunate animals. The father joyfully released the young man from his impending fate, and taking the creatures slaughtered them as food for the inhabitants of Mecca, the residue being left to the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, for the family of Abdul Muttalib refused to taste of food hallowed as a sacrifice to the gods.

The story is romantic, but pregnant with importance. The events of that day had changed the history of the world, inasmuch, as the lad, Abdullah by name, whose life was thus spared, lived to become the father of the Prophet of Arabia.

After an interval of some years passed by Abdul Muttalib in consolidating his power and strengthening his position, the hand of time points to the memorable year, A.D. 570, when Mecca was invaded by Abraha, the Abyssinian Viceroy of Yaman. That potentate had erected at Sana a magnificent cathedral, a circumstance which inflamed the hearts of the Arabs with angry feelings, as they considered it an attempt to divert the pilgrimage of their tribes to another direction than that of the sacred precincts of Mecca; so they assumed a hostile attitude and endeavoured to thwart the building of the objectionable edifice. The Viceroy, enraged in turn at this state of affairs, resolved to attack the "City of Cities," and raze its temple to the ground. Upon this enterprise he set out with a considerable army, in the train of which

was led an elephant, a circumstance so singular and remarkable in the annals of Arabia, that the commander, his host, the invasion, and the year are to this day linked in the memories of the people with the name of that mighty creature. A prince of the old Himyar stock, with an army of Arab adherents, was the first to oppose the advance of the Abyssinians. The venturous warrior was, however, defeated, though his life was spared, and he was permitted to follow the camp of the conqueror as a prisoner of war. A like result attended the efforts of a local chieftain, who, in the northern limits of Yaman, endeavoured to stop the progress of the invasion. Thence the elated Abyssinian proceeded to a spot but three days' march from Mecca; the inhabitants—possibly making discretion the better part of valour—sent to say that they had no concern with the Kaba, to destroy which was the object of the warlike enterprise, and would willingly permit a guide to direct the Abyssinian army to the spot. For this purpose they sent a man named Abu Rughal, but scarce had the treacherous miscreant proceeded a day's march than he sickened and died. Centuries afterwards the Meccans were wont to mark their abhorrence of the traitor by casting stones at his tomb as they passed. In spite of the misfortune which befel their guide, the Abyssinian troops continued their journey, carrying off what cattle they could secure, amongst the rest, some camels belonging to Abdul Muttalib, till they came at length to the outskirts of the city; an embassy was then despatched to the inhabitants. "Abraha," so the message ran, "had no desire to do them injury. His only object was to demolish the Kaba—that

performed, he would retire without shedding the blood of any."

The Meccans had already resolved that it would be vain to oppose the invader by force of arms, but the destruction of the Kaba they refused to allow upon any save compulsory terms. At last the embassy prevailed upon Abdul Muttalib and the chieftains of some of the other Meccan tribes to repair to the Viceroy's camp, and there plead their cause. The visitors were treated with distinguished honour. To gain over the envoy the camels which had been plundered from him on the march, were restored by Abraha; but the dusky warrior could obtain no answer such as to meet his wishes in regard to the Kaba. "Another is its master who will surely defend it," was the oracular speech of the Hashimite envoy. The chiefs who accompanied the Quraish ruler, less confident in the miraculous protection thus promised, offered a third of the wealth of the region of Tihama if the Abyssinian Viceroy would desist from his designs against their temple. But he refused; the negotiations were thereupon broken off, and the chieftains returned to Mecca. The people, by the advice of their head, now made preparations for retiring in a body to the hills and defiles in the vicinity, on the day before the expected attack. As Abdul Muttalib leaned upon the ring of the door of the Kaba he is said to have prayed aloud in the following terms, to the Deity whom he had been taught to worship and venerate:—"Defend, O Lord, thine own Home, and suffer not the cross to triumph over the Kaba!" He then relaxed his hold, and betaking himself with the rest of the people to

the neighbouring heights, awaited the course of events.

Meanwhile a pestilential distemper had shown itself in the camp of the Abyssinian Viceroy. It broke out with deadly pustules and frightful blains, and was probably an aggravated form of small-pox. In confusion and dismay the army commenced its retreat. Abandoned by their guides many perished among the valleys, while a flood (such is the pious legend) sent by the wrath of Heaven, swept off multitudes into the sea. Abraha himself, a mass of malignant and putrid sores, died in pain and misery on his return to his capital.

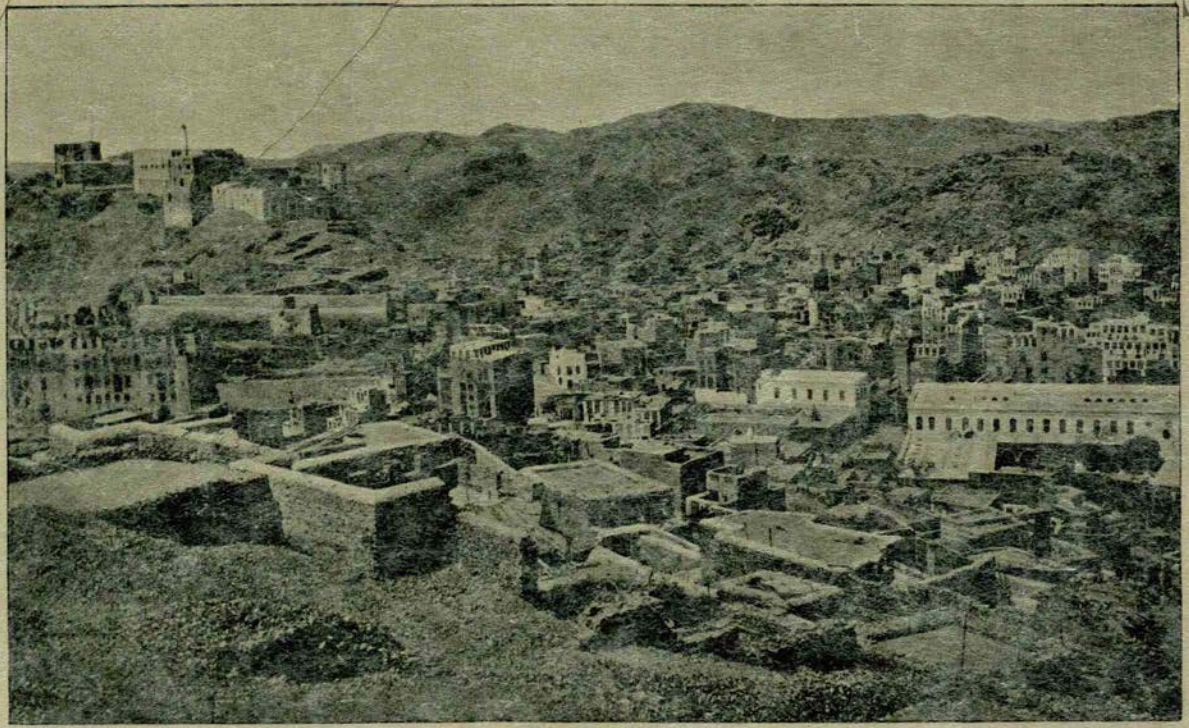
After the disastrous termination of the Expedition of the Elephant, Abdul Muttalib, then about seventy years of age, enjoyed the rank and consideration of the foremost chief of Mecca. A few months previous to this event he had taken his youngest son, Abdullah, a stripling of four-and-twenty summers, to the house of a distant kinsman, and there affianced him to a lady of the name of Amina. The bridegroom remained with his wife for three days, and then set out on a mercantile expedition to Syria. On his way back he sickened and died at Madina, leaving his young widow far advanced in pregnancy. So it happened that fifty-three days after the attack of Abraha—that is 20th August, A.D. 570—a hapless infant was born into the world, inheriting nought but five camels, a flock of goats, and the house in which his mother dwelt, to which heritage of wealth it may be perhaps fair to add the slave girl (Baraka by name) who tended the suckling. Abdul Muttalib on hearing the tidings, took the infant in his arms, and went to

the Kaba, where, standing by the holy house, he gave thanks to God. The child thus ushered into life with all the surroundings of poverty and humility, was called Muhammad, and was destined in the fulness of time to become the Prophet of Arabia, at whose command countless thousands bent their knee in submissive obedience, while his memory still lives in the hearts of innumerable myriads of devotees, who worship as a god a being twelve centuries ago no more than a poor, feeble, portionless babe of the desert.

CHAPTER II

MUHAMMAD. A.D. 570-632

According to the wont of the Arabs, the infant Muhammad was made over to the charge of a slave woman named Baraka: but after he had been suckled a few days, a party of wanderers from the desert arrived at Mecca with several women, who offered themselves as nurses for the infants of the city. Accordingly the child was placed in the hands of one of the matrons in question, by name Halima, and for five years he remained amongst the Bani Sad in the tents of his adopted parents. To this accidental residence amidst the most eloquent of Arab tribes, the Prophet of Arabia was indebted for the elegance of diction which contributed so much in after years towards the success of his mission. "Verily, I am the most perfect Arab amongst you; my descent is from the Quraish, and my tongue is the tongue of the Bani Sad." Such was the boast of a man, conscious how much in his career was due to the beauty and sweetness of the language in which he clothed the thoughts, the expression of which gave life and vigour to the mission he proclaimed.



APPROACH TO MECCA.

Reproduced by permission from C. Snouck Hurgronje's "Bilder aus Mekka."

[*To face p.* 34.

After remaining at Mecca for upwards of a year, Muhammad was taken by his mother, Amina, to Madina, but on the return home, after a sojourn of a month in the city, she fell sick and died (A.D. 576). Whereupon the little orphan was carried back to his native city, Mecca, by his nurse Baraka, who handed him over to his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, at that time a patriarch of fourscore years. "The child," says Sir W. Muir, "was treated by him with singular fondness. A rug used to be spread under the shadow of the Kaba, and on it the aged chief reclined in shelter from the heat of the sun. Around the carpet, but at a respectful distance, sat his sons. The little Muhammad was wont to run close up to the patriarch and unceremoniously take possession of his rug; his sons would seek to drive him off, but Abdul Muttalib would interpose, saying, 'Let my little son alone,' stroke him on the back, and delight to hear his childish prattle."

Thus passed an interval of two years, when the grandfather paid the debt of nature (A.D. 578), having on his deathbed consigned the guardianship of his orphan grandchild to his son Abu Talib, who discharged the trust with most scrupulous care and diligence: indeed, he scarce ever allowed the lad to leave his side, and when he had occasion to undertake a mercantile journey to Syria, it needed but little persuasion on the part of the child, now twelve years old, to induce his benefactor to allow him to accompany the caravan.

The youth of Muhammad was spent amongst the hills and dales around Mecca, tending such sheep and goats as might from time to time be placed in his

charge, the hire received being taken home to his uncle Abu Talib, whose slender resources stood in need of any assistance which the young shepherd could afford. But a change was at hand. Abu Talib determined that his nephew, who had reached his five-and-twentieth birthday, should seek a more extended sphere of action. "I am, as thou knowest, a man of small substance, and truly the times deal hardly with me." Such was the language of the noble but impoverished Quraishite. "Now here is a caravan of thine own tribe about to start for Syria, and Khadija, daughter of Quwailid, needeth men of our tribe to send forth with her merchandise. If thou wert to offer thyself she would readily accept thy services." So it happened that Muhammad betook himself to Syria, where he acquitted himself with sagacity and prudence. On his return he recounted to Khadija the tale of his doings, and the handsome widow, struck by the noble features and comely form of the young man before her, formed the resolution that her agent should, if thus it might chance, fill the more dignified portion of husband. It may well be imagined that the young man was nothing loth. Khadija was distinguished alike by birth and fortune, in that her father Quwailid was a direct and near descendant of the famous Qussai, while the considerable substance which she inherited by her former marriages had been increased by mercantile speculation. Added to this, she was handsome and fair to behold. But how could she expect her father to consent to the alliance. She, a matron whose hand had been sought by many a noble suitor from amongst the chiefs of the Quraish,

while Muhammad was but poor and humble, with no pretensions and no prospects. The difficulty was, however, speedily overcome. The ready-witted widow prepared a feast at which she induced her father to partake somewhat freely of the good cheer provided for him. When matters were ripe, she artfully introduced the object of her adoration, and induced the old man to unite him in marriage with herself in the presence of a witness. Awakening to clearer consciousness the fond father was surprised to find himself surrounded by tokens of a nuptial feast. Still greater was his astonishment when he learned what had happened, and that he had given his consent to a match of which he did not approve.

This union (A.D. 595) proved the turning-point in Muhammad's career, as it not only removed from his path the necessity of living by the sweat of his brow, but afforded him time and opportunity to reflect upon, and bring into play those spiritual longings which for years had agitated his bosom. It was also emphatically a happy marriage, while, in spite of Khadija's somewhat mature age, no less than six children in due course gladdened the abode of the future Lawgiver of Arabia. The eldest offspring was a son, by name Qasim, then followed four daughters in succession, Zainab, Rukayya, Fatima, and Umm Kalzum; last of all was born his second son, Abdullah.

For a considerable period the tenor of Muhammad's life was smooth and uneventful, but when he was about five-and-thirty years old an incident occurred in his career, foreshadowing that marvellous power of turning to account the ordinary circum-

stances of life, which, in after times, gave him a command over the hearts of men such as has never been surpassed, rarely indeed equalled, in the history of the world. In A.D. 605, it happened that a violent storm sweeping down the valley of Mecca, hurled destruction upon the sacred temple; while to add to the evil, the edifice being roofless, a band of robbers clambered over the walls and carried off some of the relics. Though these latter were recovered, it was resolved that measures should be taken to avoid dangers of theft in the future; accordingly the Quraish, dividing themselves into four bodies, commenced to heighten the walls, of which one was assigned to each of the four sections of the tribe. In spite of the sacrilege of dismantling the holy fabric, so sacred in the eyes of a pious Arab, the work proceeded without interruption, until it became necessary to place the venerated "Black Stone" (to be hereafter described) in such a position in the Eastern Corner, that it could readily be kissed by the votaries who annually repaired to the temple. The honour of handling this most revered of relics was so great that each family of the Quraish advanced an exclusive pretension to the coveted privilege. The strife waxed warm, and the danger of bloodshed became imminent. It so happened that Muhammad one day chanced to pass through the midst, at a time when the various aspirants, unable to arrange their quarrel, had argued that the first person who entered by a certain gate of the city should be arbitrator in the matter; it thus fell to the lot of "The faithful," as he was known amongst his kinsfolk, to decide the dispute. "Calm and self-possessed," so writes the biographer

of the Prophet of Arabia, "Muhammad received the commission, and, with his usual sagacity, at once resolved upon an expedient which should conciliate all. Taking off his mantle and spreading it upon the ground, he placed the stone thereon, and said, 'Now let one from each of your four divisions come forward, and raise a corner of this mantle.' Four chiefs approached, and seizing the corners simultaneously, lifted the stone. When it had reached the proper height, Muhammad with his own hand guided it to its place."

Five comparatively uneventful years elapsed, and the hero of this episode was now approaching his fortieth year.

"Always pensive," again we quote the eloquent words of Sir William Muir, "he had of late become even more thoughtful and retiring. Contemplation and reflection now engaged his whole mind. The debasement of his people, his own uncertainty as to the true religion, the dim and imperfect shadows of Judaism and Christianity exciting doubts without satisfying them, pressed heavily upon his soul, and he frequently retired to seek relief in meditation amongst the solitary valleys and rocks near Mecca. His favourite spot was a cave in the declivities at the foot of Mount Hira, a lofty conical hill, two or three miles north of Mecca. Thither he would retire for some days at a time, and his faithful wife sometimes accompanied him. The continued solitude, instead of stilling his anxiety, magnified into sterner and more impressive shapes the solemn realities which perplexed and agitated his soul. . . . All around was bleak and rugged. . . . There was harmony between these desert scenes of external nature and the troubled, chaotic elements of the spiritual world within. By degrees his impulsive and susceptible mind was wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement; and he would give vent to his agitation in wild and rhapsodical language, the counterpart of his inward struggles after truth."

It may readily be supposed that the careless and

indifferent denizens of the desert received, as the day-dreams of a half-witted enthusiast, the warnings and expostulations which Muhammad now began to utter; yet a few regarded his sayings with attention if not with reverence; but even these latter argued that they had better be content with the light their Maker had given them. "If," said they, "a Prophet had been sent unto us, we should, no doubt, have followed his directions, and been equally devout and spiritual in our worship as the Jews and Christians." Though surrounded by a small band of adherents who recognised him as their spiritual head, Muhammad saw clearly that he would be powerless, unless charged with a "Divine commission" to call forth his people from darkness into light. Distracted in mind and soul, he betook himself to the desert, where under the canopy of the skies, he struggled with a destiny fraught, in his case, with such difficulties and anxieties. But while he meditated on these things a heavenly visitant appeared before his astonished eyes (so Muslims would have it believed), charged with the "memorable behest" *—

"Recite in the name of the Lord who created:—
Created Man from nought but congealed blood:—
Recite! For thy Lord is beneficent.
It is He who hath taught (to record Revelation) with the Pen;—
Hath taught Man that which he knoweth not.
Nay, verily Man is rebellious;
Because he seeth himself to abound in Wealth.
Verily unto thy Lord is the return of all.
Hast thou seen him that holdeth back
The servant (of God) when he prayeth?
What thinkest thou? had he listened to right Direction,

* *Quran*, chapter 96.

And commanded unto Piety?
Dost thou not see that he hath rejected the Truth, and turned his back;
What! Doth he not know that God seeth?
Nay, verily, if he forbear not, We shall drag him by the Forelock—
The lying, sinful Forelock!
Then let him call his company of friends, and We shall call the guards of Hell;
Nay! submit not unto him; but worship, and draw nigh unto the Lord."

Muhammad now (A.D. 610) claimed to have become the servant of God, the Prophet of the Most High, but his "Mission" was unheeded; the busy world had no mind to listen to the rhapsodies of a religious enthusiast. Weary in mind, and his soul filled with despair, the idea seized his frenzied brain, that to end an existence so painful and full of perplexities, he would rush headlong over one of the wild cliffs where he was wont to repair to cool his thoughts, and collect his ideas. But his better judgment prevailed, and the fatal resolution was cast aside. An invisible influence held him back! Nor did he pass unrewarded; again for the second time an angel from heaven came down from the skies with comfort and support for the struggling and tortured son of Adam, and, falling into a trance, he received the command to "Arise and preach."

Slowly and surely did the twice-consecrated "Mission" of Muhammad gain ground. In the forty-fourth year of his age (A.D. 614), we find him surrounded by a knot of adherents, all of whom looked up to him as their divinely-appointed guide.

The first convert to his doctrines is supposed to have been the faithful wife of his bosom, though

certain sectaries would have it believed otherwise. "So Khadija believed," thus is it recorded in the annals of Islam, "and attested the truth of that which came from God. Thus was the Lord minded to lighten the burden of his Prophet, for he heard nothing that grieved him touching his rejection by his people, but he had recourse unto her, and she comforted, reassured, and supported him." Her example was followed by Zaid, the husband of Baraka, the nurse of Muhammad; while his father's brother's son, the lad Ali, who lived under the same roof with the Prophet, had grown up from a child in the faith of his distinguished guardian and protector. To this small group—the first germs of the Muslim faith—must be added the name of Abu Bakr, the bosom friend of the new apostle—a convert who, as possessing both wealth and influence, secured for the recently proclaimed creed an amount of consideration and respect which it could scarcely have otherwise obtained. Within a period of between three or four years after Muhammad had assumed the rôle of a Prophet, the converts to his preaching amounted to upwards of forty souls, including amongst the number the well-known Osman, who, together with the aforementioned Ali, succeeded in the fulness of time to the position held by the founder of the faith; nor must mention be omitted of the famous Bilal, the son of an Abyssinian slave-girl, shortly, and for future ages, to be renowned throughout the Muhammadan world as the first "Muazzin," or "Crier to Prayer."

It was not to be expected that the citizens of Mecca would regard with much favour the man who was wont "to speak unto the people about the

heavens." The religion of their ancestors might be wrong, but what evidence had *they* that the "Divine commission" of the Prophet who had sprung up in their midst was aught but a device to secure to himself the obedience and support of his credulous brethren? When, however, Muhammad began to abuse their idols, and to proclaim that all who trusted in such blocks of wood and stone would be consigned to the bottomless pit, "they became displeased, and began to treat him with contumely." Yet at this time, as is generally the case, persecution failed in its object, while, on the other hand, it afforded a plausible excuse for opposing force to force against those who "obstructed the ways of the Lord"; and so it happened that a contention arose, and "the first blood was shed in Islam."

In the fourth year of his Mission (A.D. 614), Muhammad removed to the house of a convert named Arqam, with the view of more peaceably expounding his new creed to those who were prepared to give him ear. Aggravated by the success of the sect which had sprung up, the Quraish commenced to ill-treat such of the humbler converts as came within the pale of their vengeance, and the wretched beings whom they seized were exposed "in the glare of the mid-day sun, upon the scorching gravel of the Meccan valley," till anguish induced them to revile their Prophet, and acknowledge the idols of their kinsfolk and fellow-countrymen. Unable to protect these sufferers for the faith, Muhammad enjoined them to seek in a foreign land that security which was denied them in their own kingdom. "Yonder," said he, pointing to the West, "lieth a region wherein

no one is wronged—a land of righteousness. Depart thither, and there remain till it pleaseth the Lord to open your way before you." So in the fifth year of the Prophet's ministry (A.D. 615), a party of fifteen souls embarked in haste for Abyssinia.

"On this occasion," says Sir W. Muir, "the emigrants were few, but the part they acted was of deep importance in the history of Islam. It convinced the Meccans of the sincerity and resolution of the converts, and proved their readiness to undergo any loss and any hardship rather than abjure the faith of Muhammad; a bright example of self-denial was exhibited to the believers generally, who were led to regard peril and exile in the cause of God as a glorious privilege and distinction. It suggested that the hostile attitude of their fellow-citizens, together with the purity of their own faith, might secure for them within the limits of Arabia itself a sympathy and hospitality as cordial as that afforded by the Abyssinians; and thus it gave birth to the idea of a greater Hijra —the emigration to Madina."

At this time the "Apostle of the Lord"—such was the title which he had assumed—broken in spirit, when he reflected on the small progress made in converting his fellow-countrymen, conceived the idea of effecting a compromise with his opponents; so one day, entering a group of Meccans who were assembled in the Kaba, he recited to them a revelation which contained an acknowledgment of the idols of Arabia. The Quraish, surprised and delighted at this recognition of their deities, prostrated themselves with one accord on the ground. With the rapidity of the wind, the rumour spread throughout the city that they had been converted, and in a brief time the welcome news was wafted to the far-off shores of Abyssinia. Encouraged by the glad tidings, the little band of refugees who had settled therein at

once determined to revisit the land of their birth, where, under the altered condition of affairs, they felt sure of a warm and hospitable reception. So, three months after they had shaken off the dust of their feet against Mecca, they once again (A.D. 616) re-appeared at the gates of the sacred city. But much had happened during the eventful weeks in which they had journeyed along with joyous hearts and eager expectations. Muhammad had made a compromise with his opponents, but he quickly perceived that his policy of concession had not stood him in good stead: the worship of images continued, while the God of Islam remained unhonoured and unheeded. The dilemma was perplexing, but his resolve was firm and unhesitating; he denounced his own actions, and proclaimed that "the devil had deceived him." Ever at hand to comfort and console the dejected Apostle of the Lord, an angel now came down from heaven, but his mission was, on this occasion, prefaced by the stern rebuke, "What is this that thou hast done? thou hast repeated before the people words that I never gave unto thee." So the terrified penitent was led to cancel the verse which had brought down upon him the wrath of his Maker, and to substitute another, proclaiming the idols of Arabia as "naught but names." But the circumstance that Muhammad had temporised with idolatry seriously undermined his position at Mecca—his explanation was laughed to scorn, and persecution waxed hotter and more severe than ever. So the new-comers from Abyssinia, on their arrival, finding matters even worse than when they quitted the city some months before, were compelled to retrace their weary steps, and for the second

time they turned their backs upon their brethren. Their number, however, was further augmented, and on their return amounted to the not inconsiderable total of 101 souls, of whom 83 were men.

Muhammad himself remained behind, but he was exposed to insults of every description at the hands of the incensed populace, who were wont to pelt him in the streets; and now and again the Prophet, who in after years numbered his followers by millions of pious Muslims, was compelled to crouch under the ledge of projecting stones, there to offer up to Heaven his prayers to the God in whom he trusted! Strange and mysterious indeed are the workings of Providence!

In the sixth year of his Mission, Muhammad was fortunate enough to secure the adhesion to his cause of two citizens of position, by name Hamza and Omar. Encouraged by this circumstance, the Prophet of Arabia, abandoning the quiet seclusion of the "House of Islam"—for thus was called his humble abode at Mecca—betook himself with his followers to the Kaba, where before all the assembled multitudes the worship of the One God was thenceforth to be performed. Islam was no longer now a down-trodden, despised faith, held by a few isolated and, for the most part, obscure converts; but a powerful faction, which challenged open hostility with those who worshipped the gods of Arabia, the idols of wood and stone. In these circumstances the Quraish bethought themselves of an expedient to reduce to submission their rivals, and the Hashimite tribe by whom the latter were supported. They entered into a solemn bond, which they impressed with their seals and hung

up in the temple, to the effect that "they would not marry their women, nor give their own in marriage to them; that they would sell nothing to them, nor buy aught from them; that dealings with them of every kind should cease." Unable to resist the attacks thus made upon them, the Prophet and his followers retired (A.D. 617) into a secluded quarter of the city, where they soon found themselves deprived even of the barest necessaries of life—the ban of the Quraish had taken fatal effect. For three years the well-nigh famished converts, in company with their wives and little ones, maintained the struggle; but the piteous cries and emaciated features of the hapless children indicated in unmistakable language how great were the hardships which the believers in the new faith had to undergo.

Fortunately a time of delivery was at hand. While the sympathies of the Quraish were aroused at the exemplary conduct of Muhammad under these trying circumstances, it was discovered that the parchment in the Kaba, on which the ban was engraved, had been devoured by vermin. Encouraged by this intelligence, the venerable Abu Talib, bent down as he was with the weight of more than four-score years, proceeded with a troop of followers, and addressed the assembled tribe in these stirring words:—"Intelligence hath reached me that your parchment hath been eaten up of insects. If my words be found true, then desist from your evil designs; if false, I will deliver up Muhammad that ye may do with him as ye list." The proposal found acceptance—the document was fetched from the Kaba, and, true enough, the greater portion thereof had been

devoured by white ants, and was no longer legible. Abu Talib thereupon bitterly upbraided them for their inhumanity, and portrayed in forcible terms their breach of social kindness. So the refugees were allowed to go forth to their respective homes. Scarce had he time to rejoice over his success, ere the cup of joy was once again dashed from the lips of the exultant Prophet. Khadija, for five-and-twenty years the wife of his bosom, was at this period (Dec. A.D. 619) taken from him, and barely, too, had he begun to realise how great was his loss, when Abu Talib, who for forty years had nurtured and protected him, was gathered to his fathers. It was an occasion for action rather than grief—something must be done, seeing that the new faith had not materially gained ground at Mecca during the last three or four years. Muhammad thereupon determined to visit the neighbouring city of Tayif, in the hope that the people might be induced to give ear to his message. With this resolve, unaccompanied save by his faithful attendant Zaid, he set out on his adventurous mission, struggling through rocky defiles for forty weary miles, till he reached the fertile valleys which surrounded the city whither he was bending his steps. But he preached to heedless listeners; the chiefs received him with cold disdain, while the populace, contrasting the poverty of the man with the richness of his mission, regarded him with contempt, and, pelting him with stones, drove him forth from the town. Wearied and lacerated, the Prophet of Arabia took refuge in an orchard; but some wealthy Meccans, sitting in their pleasure gardens near Tayif, had watched the flight of Muhammad, and, moved by compassion at his sorry